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TAGS: ASEC CASC MP PGOV PREL PTER MA

SUBJECT: EAC CONVENED TO DISCUSS RAJOELINA'S ASYLUM,
MILITARY MUTINY AND RECENT CIVIL UNREST

REF: STATE 103991

¶1. (SBU) An Emergency Action Committee (EAC) Meeting, chaired by DCM Stromayer, was convened at the DCR, (the Alternate Command Center (ACC)), on Sunday, March 8. Initially, the Ambassador called a meeting to provide updates to POL, PA, DAO and RSO on the current political situation, but given evolving events, it was determined that the expertise and opinions of the EAC would be helpful and an immediate EAC meeting was called.

¶2. (C) The meeting convened with Ambassador Niels Marquardt informing the EAC that Andry Rajoelina (TGV), the former Mayor of Antananarivo and self-proclaimed head of the transitional government, had been harbored in the French Compound since Friday morning, following his heated attempted arrest the night before. Although this information is supposed to be guarded, the President leaked this information via his own media outlets, ignoring a commitment he had made to the French Charge' when she informed him of the asylum request on Friday. It should be noted that the French Compound is located in Ivandry, the residential area for the American Embassy Community. As of Monday morning, all other news outlets were still reporting that Rajoelina was in hiding in an undisclosed location. The Ambassador also noted that the Charge' was already receiving threatening phone calls about harboring TGV. Of note also was that the President was choosing to ignore recommendations made by the UN and the COMs, including disabling TGV's radio station capabilities and trying to arrest him.

¶3. (C) On the evening of March 5 and into the evening of March 6, a crowd of TGV supporters had surrounded Rajoelina's home in attempt to protect him and prevent his impending arrest. The incident at TGV's residence, located next to the Lycee Francais, lead to a stand-off between EMMO Forces (Etat Major Mixte Operationelle - Security Force comprised of Gendarme, Military and National Police elements) and the TGV supporters. During the standoff, tear gas and warning shots were utilized by EMMO. Unfortunately, one mission employee was caught in the standoff on the night of March 5 and was forced to spend the night with her hosts. The following day, the standoff prevented any of the school children from the Lycee Francais from departing the heated area. One attempt was made to put the children on a bus to let them leave, but the effort was thwarted by the crowd. Eventually, EMMO cleared a path for the school busses to depart. A child of an embassy employee was in the school at that time and among those who left by bus.

¶4. (C) A second focus of the EAC was to discuss what was being referred to as a "military mutiny". All members of the Malagasy military were called to their respective camps at 12 noon on March 8. There were reports that the military claimed that they will no longer adhere to the President's orders and are independent, but that they will still maintain order and security. This is significant as the military stance could be critical to the final outcome of this crisis as they have the reputation of remaining neutral during previous crises. Rumors circulated that the presidential guard forces were to attack the military's Camp Capsat, the location of the

majority of the military's arsenal and numerous vigilante roadblocks were set up to protect the camp. As night progressed, shots were reported by an Embassy FSN and the SD team at Capsat. It is still undetermined who was involved in the conflict, but it reported that the fire was between the military and EMMO forces. (Note: This morning, an SD member sighted a dead body outside of the camp. The identity of the individual is not yet known.) The National Police and the Gendarmerie seem to remain intact, but there are rumors that the Gendarme are not comfortable getting involved in incidents inside the city as it is not normally within their jurisdiction. Additionally, a statement from the National Gendarmerie dated March 8 became available today, giving its version of events on March 8. Copy provided by e-mail.

¶ 15. (C) RSO expressed concern that over the last four days, that there were three separate incidents involving American Embassy community member being caught in the middle of confrontations between TGV supporters and EMMO (e.g. the two involved in the Lycee Francais stand-off described in paragraph three (3) and one SD member who was arrested (see below). Now that the President had banned protests in 13 Mai, the predictable location for all gathering over the last few weeks, spontaneous crowds and looters were springing up elsewhere in the city, making it very difficult for the SD team to adequately cover the situation. In addition, last week, one SD member while en route to the CMR area, was picked up by the Gendarmerie. He suffered police brutality, had his life threatened and remained incarcerated overnight

until the RSO staff could ensure his release. This SD member never revealed his association with the U.S. Embassy. RSO has since pulled back SD forces to increase the team's safety. Given that, RSO will no longer be able to "clear routes", nor guarantee safe passage, for embassy employees. Embassy also protested this incident via diplomatic note.

¶ 16. (C) Immediately during the March 8 EAC, the American Embassy community was advised via radio announcement to remain close to home. This measure was also enacted by the UN Security. RSO requested that if the embassy was to remain open tomorrow, all employee should use the shuttle, which would depart earlier than normal and after RSO had cleared the route. This is in response to last week's numerous, sudden roadblocks, clashes between EMMO and TGV supporters and the subsequent use of tear gas and warning shots to disperse the crowds, all of which made travel to and from the embassy difficult for three days straight last week.

¶ 17. (C) The Ambassador called for another EAC will to convened after country team on Tuesday morning (subsequently advanced to Monday afternoon at the DCR in Ivandry). He requested more solid information to be gathered for that EAC, and asked all members to reflect carefully on the deterioration of the security situation in view of a renewed discussion then on moving to AD. In addition, the Ambassador called for a thorough review of the tripwires, which had not been available on Sunday due to the spontaneous nature of that initial EAC. On Tuesday afternoon, there will be a meeting for all American Embassy employees and their families to discuss the new reality of the situation and the question of AD. The DCM sent out a message Sunday asking the community for its feedback on AD in advance of the EAC. The DCM also contacted the American School to encourage them to reconsider their contingency plans in light of last week's incident at the Lycee Francais. There is also an all-American Community Town Hall meeting scheduled for Wednesday afternoon in response to inquiries we are receiving. (Such advance notice is required for Town Halls.) TDY travel is still being considered on a case by case basis.

¶ 18. (C) Note: As of 6:45 am Monday, the Ambassador, after receiving updates from the RSO, decided to close the Mission purely as a precautionary measure. At that time, there was a near-complete information vacuum in Antananarivo making a more considered evaluation of the situation impossible.
MARQUARDT